

APPROVED



## Fitchburg State University

### Minutes

#### Board of Trustees Meeting

Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees Meeting

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#### Date and Time

Tuesday November 8, 2022 at 8:15 AM

#### Location

Presidents' Hall, Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave., Fitchburg, MA 01420

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Notice of a meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees on Tuesday, November 8, 2022 at 8:15 a.m.

The meeting will take place in Presidents' Hall, Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave., Fitchburg, MA 01420

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#### Trustees Present

A. Turner, C. Stimpson, D. Phillips, D. Tiernan (remote), E. Gregoire, K. Spinelli, L. Barrieau, M. Fiorentino, Jr., S. King-Goodwin

#### Trustees Absent

J. Flanagan

#### Guests Present

A. Pereira, A.J. Tourigny, C. Estrella, C. Picone, Campus Community, E. Budd, F. Barricelli, G. Doiron, G. Doiron, H. Parkinson, J. Bry, J. Hanselman, J. Murdoch, J. Wolfman, L. Bayless, M. Bruun, M. McKenzie, N. Robichaud, P. Marshall, P. McCafferty, P. Weizer, R. Diakite, R. Toomey, S. Goodlett, S. Levine, Y. Malcolm

## I. Opening Items

### A. Record Attendance and Guests

### B. Call the Meeting to Order

D. Phillips called a meeting of the board of trustees of Fitchburg State University to order on Tuesday Nov 8, 2022 at 8:16 AM.

### C. Public Comments

Dr. Eric Budd, Professor, Economics, History and Political Science in the School of Arts and Sciences addressed the board. He thanked them for allowing the time for him to address some issues from faculty and staff. He had circulated a petition to all staff and faculty with concerns about the state of the university especially with regard to enrollment decline. He noted that the Board had received the petition in advance of today's meeting. He stated that 150 university members had signed the petition. He stated that morale on campus is low. He is asking the Board to look at this situation.

D. Phillips thanked Professor Budd for his remarks and responding that as a Board, they cannot discuss the petition in Public Comments.

M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to request the Executive Committee to review the petition and report back at a future Board meeting.

E. Gregoire seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

### D. Approve Minutes from the October 18, 2022 meeting - VOTE (12-22/23)

C. Stimpson made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 10-18-22.

K. Spinelli seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

## II. Sabbatical Requests

### A. Act on President's recommendation for faculty sabbatical requests - VOTE (13-22/23)

The President presented the sabbaticals. He indicated that they were all strong proposals. He noted the formal process before recommendations are sent to him. He recommended that the proposals be approved by the board.

There was a discussion.

M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to approve the faculty sabbatical leaves for the academic year 2023-2024.

K. Spinelli seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

### III. Enrollment Update

#### A. Rich Toomey will provide the Enrollment Update

R. Toomey provided enrollment history, current strategies and future goals. He stated that the university is currently working on building the 2023 fall class and working on longer-term enrollment strategies for future classes. He noted new roles for members of the admissions team and the overall enhanced expertise within the division. He highlighted changes made in the Welcome Center and the overall review of processes. He also talked about the tactical changes being made to recruitment. He informed the board of the variety of groups that have visited campus and the expanded recruitment travel schedule. He noted changes made to the scholarship award process. He talked about the redesigned admissions packet which includes scholarship information at the time of acceptance.

He next presented demographic information that reflects the decline in enrollment both locally and across the state university segment. While the pandemic certainly played a critical role in depressing enrollment rates, the declines also reflect the known longer-term demographic shift. He cited information that suggests that students have not returned to higher education and currently indicate different aspirations. He discussed fall 2023-2025 enrollment goals. He stated that both short-term and longer-term goals are needed. He talked about recruitment and retention. He mentioned that admissions and members of the enrollment management team will be offering a series of listening sessions on campus to solicit input prior to finalizing action plans.

A discussion ensued.

M. Fiorentino stated that he was glad that the distinction was made between enrollment and recruitment. He also commented that he felt the university was behind on this. He asked about determining the enrollment goals going forward? R. Toomey responded that for admissions, they were looking at the variety of information sources to determine what was realistic, and that the primary focus moving forward was yield. He talked about the various marketing levers to be moved in an effort to meet the university goals.

A question and answer session ensued that included topics of student support services, enhanced partnerships, what makes Fitchburg State distinct, marketing and branding. The Board needs to be intimately involved in all of this.

There was a discussion on spring recruitment, retention, campus events, increasing internships and demographics.

E. Gregoire stated that the retention piece is a big part of the enrollment plan. Is the plan built for different levels as it relates to residence life, the graduate programs and other entities on campus? He asked what is the enrollment target for 2025?

R. Toomey responded that these all are included in the planning process. Efforts are currently underway for spring semester recruiting. He talked about the academic plan, and the student success plan that need to be tied together.

There was a discussion on data. S. King-Goodwin suggested having the data as a discussion item at a board meeting. R. Lapidus responded that data would be available at a future meeting. There was a discussion on enrollment and how it ties to the budget.

#### **IV. Academic Affairs Subcommittee Report**

##### **A. Jennifer Flanagan, Committee-Chair, will provide the Academic Affairs report.**

D. Phillips informed the Board that Jennifer Flanagan was elected chair of committee.

P. Marshall provided the Academic Affairs committee report in Trustee Flanagan's absence. She stated at the committee meeting they reviewed the committee's duties, elected a chair, talked about various programs in the pipeline and variety of other activities taking place on campus. She talked about the internal process for approving new programs and the Department of Higher Education process.

#### **V. Notifications**

##### **A. Personnel Actions (N03-22/23)**

The notifications were presented for informational purposes.

M. Fiorentino asked about the two actions regarding salary increases. The President responded that they were needed to remain competitive and retain good employees.

#### **VI. Student Trustee Report**

##### **A. Allison Turner will provide the Student Trustee report.**

A. Turner provided an update on the student events and activities since the last meeting.

They include Homecoming events with a carnival, a football game, a cornhole tournament, and a casino night. On Oct. 27 the World Integrated Nations Club hosted their annual Diwali celebration which is the festival of lights. She next discussed the Falcon Talks that were held recently hosted by the Student Government Association. She

thanked Trustee Eric Gregoire, Dr. Laura Bayless, Mr. Jay Bry, Dr. Henry Parkinson, and Mr. Jeff McAvoy for attending and providing an opportunity for students to directly interact with campus leaders and address their concerns. She talked about her meeting with Mr. Aaron (A.J.) Tourigny which was a walking tour of downtown Fitchburg. It was great to learn about the future developments. She also talked about the monthly meetings held with Dr. Bayless where they discussed a variety of topics that included Community Health Connections, and staff retention.

E. Gregoire commented that he appreciated the invitation to attend the Falcon Talks. He thought these types of events were valuable and asked that the Board be informed so they might participate at other events when possible.

## **VII. Chair's Report**

### **A. Debbie Phillips will provide the Chair's report.**

D. Phillips waived her official report.

She did confirm the date for the Trustee Retreat, which will be held on June 6, 2023 and to send along any topics that would be of interest.

## **VIII. President's Report**

### **A. COVID Update**

The President informed the Board of the state of COVID in the Fitchburg State University community. He stated that the reported number of positive cases continues to be low, and that free test kits, masks and sanitizer are widely available.

### **B. Open House Update**

The President reported that at the recent Open House, the numbers were lower. The attendance does reflect the demographic downturn. He also noted that students are tending to be less engaged in making the college decision early as compared to prior years. This behavior is being universally reported. He noted the increased number and variety of opportunities for potential students to interact with the university outside of the scheduled open houses. Numbers for these types of events are strong indicating a change in behavior and an interest in a more targeted communication and interaction approach.

C. Stimpson suggested remote options for Open House attendees. The President responded that there are remote options and the university is trying a variety of different methods to get information to potential students.

A discussion ensued.

### **C. Open Forum Update**

The President informed the Board of the Open Forums. On November 2, 2022, there were two sessions, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Typically, more staff attend the morning session and faculty in the afternoon.

D. Phillips asked about attendance. The President responded that the numbers for both sessions were modest with more staff than faculty participating. He stated that a number of individuals attended both sessions.

The President holds a fall opening day address, and a fall Open Forum along with a spring Open Forum centered around the budget. Over the years, there have also been a number of conversations on the financials.

M. Fiorentino stated it would be important to know about the campus Open Forums.

A discussion ensued.

### **D. Commencement Ceremonies**

The President reported that the Winter Commencement Ceremony will take place on Friday, December 16, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. in the Recreation Center. All Board members are invited to attend.

### **E. News Articles**

The news articles were submitted for informational purposes.

## **IX. Closing Items**

### **A. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:38 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
D. Tiernan

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## **Documents used during the meeting**

- VOTE Minutes.pdf
- Memo to Board sabbatical recommendations 22-23.pdf
- VOTE Sabbaticals 2022.pdf
- Write-ups - Updated.pdf

- Notification Report November 2022.pdf
- News Clips Nov 2022.pdf